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Apartment Living

Giving Amenities a New Ring: Latest Offering at Charles E. Smith Properties Is Complete Telephone Service

BY LAURA OCHIPINTI ZANER

Pools, fitness centers, clubhouses, and fireplaces—these are just some of the amenities that apartment residents have come to expect in upscale communities throughout the Washington metropolitan area. Now they can expect something new: voice mail. That's because there is now a national telephone network, called GE Capital ResCom, that provides telephone and other communication services exclusively for apartment residents.

The network recently announced that it has teamed up with Charles E. Smith Residential Realty to market complete packages of high quality phone services at significant savings at Smith owned or managed apartment communities throughout the metropolitan area.

The company has already begun to convert 16 properties located in Maryland and Virginia to the new service, and will eventually install the service in all their new properties. Residents of the Westerly at Worldgate, an upscale community managed by the Smith Company, have enjoyed the telephone service since the community opened last year.

Access to the telephone network allows residents of these properties to avoid the extra step of contacting the phone company to have their phones turned on—residents are simply given their new telephone number at the time they sign their apartment leases. The package provides a range of additional features such as call waiting, call forwarding, free unlisted numbers, and voice mail. There's also what's called "number portability," a

feature that allows customers to keep their old phone numbers if they so desire.

In addition, residents can sign up for one of three different plans—the Silver, Gold or Platinum, and receive as much as a 20 percent discount on all long distance calls. Because the management

company receives what's called "bulk rates" from the service provider, it is able to pass on the savings to its residents.

In addition to the Westerly, other Smith-owned apartment communities that are expected to offer the service in the near future include The Lansburg, located on 8th St., NW, and the Ellipse, which is located at the Fairfax Government Center.

The venture with GE Capital Rescom represents the Smith Company's latest effort to remain on the cutting edge when it comes to services and amenities.

"We're a leader in providing a wide range of amenities to our residents," says Lee La Rochelle, Smith's vice president of marketing for residential management, who notes that many of the company's communi-

ties already offer concierge, valet and maid services, as well as 24-hour front desk staff, courtesy patrols and on-site fitness centers and other recreational facilities.

Enhanced telephone service, however, may just be the beginning for today's apartment residents. GE Capital Rescom is one of several firms across the nation that are pioneering the "smart apartment." According to GE Capital Rescom, such apartments will come with both the high-tech engineering capability and the high-tech products that will enable residents to enjoy such state-of-the-art services as teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and interactive television. ■



A national telephone network called GE Capital ResCom teamed up with Charles E. Smith Residential Realty to provide the residents of the Westerly at Worldgate with high quality telephone services.